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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [KJUS](#) [PINR](#) [BA](#) [IZ](#) [IR](#)

SUBJECT: PM ENDORSES FOR ENHANCED SECURITY COOPERATION,
WARNS OF SHIA-DOMINATED IRAQI GOVERNMENT

REF: MANAMA 270

Classified By: Classified by Ambassador William T. Monroe. Reason: 1.4

(b)(d)

Summary

1. (C) Prime Minister Shaikh Khalifa told the Ambassador February 26 that Bahrain must improve its security system with American assistance. The United States continues to be the leader in dealing with security threats while the Gulf region has fallen behind. The PM expressed his admiration for the American legal system, in which no one is above the law, and noted the beneficial impact of U.S. education exchanges and programs on Bahrain. He stated that a stable, united Iraq should be the overriding objective, and that self-rule in various areas of the country could lead to division. The PM warned that a Shia-dominated Iraqi government would be pro-Iran and some Iraqi politicians are speaking publicly about Iranian influence in the country. While it would be a mistake to underestimate the Prime Minister, in this meeting he appeared at a bit of a loss as he confronted the changing world around him. End Summary.

U.S. Support for Improving Domestic Security

2. (C) Prime Minister Shaikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa told the Ambassador February 26 that Bahrain needs U.S. support in developing its security system. He said that the Gulf region has fallen behind other areas, particularly the United States, in dealing with security threats. It is important for Bahrain to understand better the reasons for recent extremist activity in Kuwait so it can prevent such a development inside the Kingdom. He commented that Bahrain already has sufficient legislation to ensure security but it is not being implemented properly. He agreed with the Ambassador's statement that the draft counter terrorism law and its provisions on criminalizing conspiracy to commit terrorist acts will fill a gap, but said that he does not want to wait for new legislation to fight crime and terrorism.

3. (S) The Ambassador responded that the United States and Bahrain share the same objectives. Security is the cornerstone of the President's foreign policy. The U.S.-Bahrain free trade agreement, which seeks to promote enhanced economic and commercial relations, can only succeed if Bahrain has a safe and secure environment. We remain deeply concerned about the group of extremists arrested last summer on terrorism conspiracy charges. We appreciate continued GOB close surveillance of the suspects. They are a small, destructive group of people very angry at the United States. The Ambassador noted that the FBI plans to visit Bahrain soon to assist in the development of a Counter-Terrorism Operations Center, which will promote information sharing and CT operations.

4. (U) Bahrain's newspapers February 27 prominently covered a statement by King Hamad, in the presence of Crown Prince Salman and the PM at a February 26 meeting of the Supreme Council of Defense, on the need for national security. The King said that the nation's leadership and the people have a common responsibility in building up the nation and defending it. All security institutions in the Kingdom must coordinate their duties and integrate their plans for safeguarding the nation. The regional and international conditions demand "the highest level of awareness and readiness to defend our national security and our achievements." In a likely related event, the PM (immediately prior to his meeting with the Ambassador) spoke publicly at his weekly "majles" about the vital importance of security for all citizens and residents. "A spirit of national unity" is crucial in ensuring Bahrain's stability and economic success, the PM said.

Following the American Legal Model

5. (C) The Prime Minister expressed his admiration for the American legal system, noting that CNN publicizes crimes of

prominent people, including business woman Martha Stewart. He wants the Bahraini system to follow the American model, where no one is above the law. He told a story about a member of parliament who objected to security procedures at the airport, telling police, "I'm above you, I'm above everybody." He said that the Bahraini system should not permit individuals to claim to be exempt from security procedures.

16. (C) The Ambassador said that democracy is not just letting people do what they want. Freedom of expression, elections, and a strong legal system are all important aspects of democracy. The United States is working with the GOB to build up the capacity of Bahrain's judiciary. We hosted a number of Bahraini legal scholars, judges, and business people in the United States on a rule of law program organized by Southern Methodist University. The American Bar Association has a program with the Ministry of Justice. The U.S. Department of Commerce's Commercial Law Development Program will hold a conference at the end of March on improving Bahrain's commercial law system. The PM agreed that Bahrain needs to strengthen its judicial sector and said he would direct his Cabinet ministers to consult with the Ambassador on legal issues and security.

17. (C) The PM recognized the beneficial impact of American scholars and education programs on Bahrain's educational system. He said there are a number of Americans teaching and studying at universities in Bahrain, and he lauded the "famous story" of the DOD Bahrain School in Manama. The Ambassador briefed the PM on our MEPI education programs, exchanges, and the Fulbright program. The PM vowed his continued cooperation.

Concern About Shia-Dominated Iraq

18. (C) In response to the Ambassador's question, the PM said that security in Iraq is an important issue for all Gulf states. A stable, united Iraq should be the overriding objective, but he warned that self-rule in various areas of Iraq could lead to division of the country. He asked, "Are we turning Iraq into a Shia state? If so, this will be an unstable situation" for the region. With Iraq being run by Shias, "will dominos topple all over the Gulf?" A Shia government will be pro-Iran, and some Iraqis including, he claimed, IIG PM Allawi, say Iranian influence is evident now in Iraq. He complained that some Iraqi politicians refer to themselves as leaders of particular sects, whereas Bahrain would prefer that they think of themselves as one people.

Comment: PM Dealing with a Changing World

19. (C) There were several discordant notes to this meeting. With no sense of irony, the person most associated with corrupt business practices (the PM) went on at length on the need to deal forthrightly with corruption. It is perhaps not a surprise, given his discomfort with the King's democratic reforms, that the PM chose as an example of someone acting above the law not a member of the government but rather a member of parliament. As the PM is most comfortable with his Sunni base, it is also not a surprise that he expressed deep concern about a Shia-dominated Iraq (a concern echoed the next day to the Ambassador by MFA MinState Abdel Ghaffar - see reftel). The PM expressed similar concerns about Shias in Iraq during a separate meeting with the Kuwait Ambassador. As the Kuwaiti Ambassador said to us, the PM was against the war in Iraq and against the democratic reforms and is uncomfortable with the results of both.

10. (C) Comment Continued: He must also be uncomfortable with his gradual detachment from the active workings of the government. While by no means isolated -- on the morning we met him, his schedule was packed with visitors to his majles and other meetings -- he continues to surround himself with the same set of advisors, but they no longer hold ministry portfolios. Most notably, Mohammed Mutawa, former Minister of Cabinet Affairs, and Abdulla Seif, former Minister of Finance and National Economy, now both advisors to the PM, were as usual present in the outer offices but did not attend the meeting. The only current Minister to attend the meeting was the PM's son, Minister of Transportation Shaikh Ali bin Khalifa al Khalifa, as is his custom. Previous meetings with the PM have included ministers with substantial U.S. issues in their portfolio, but none were in attendance for this meeting. It would be a mistake to discount the power of the Prime Minister, who remains especially powerful in the business community and knows how to cultivate his traditional support, but in this meeting he appeared at a bit of a loss as he contemplated the changing world around him. End Comment.

Bio Note

¶11. (C) While apparently otherwise healthy and slim, one of the PM's ankles appeared to be swollen. He walked slowly but without noticeable difficulty.

¶12. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

MONROE